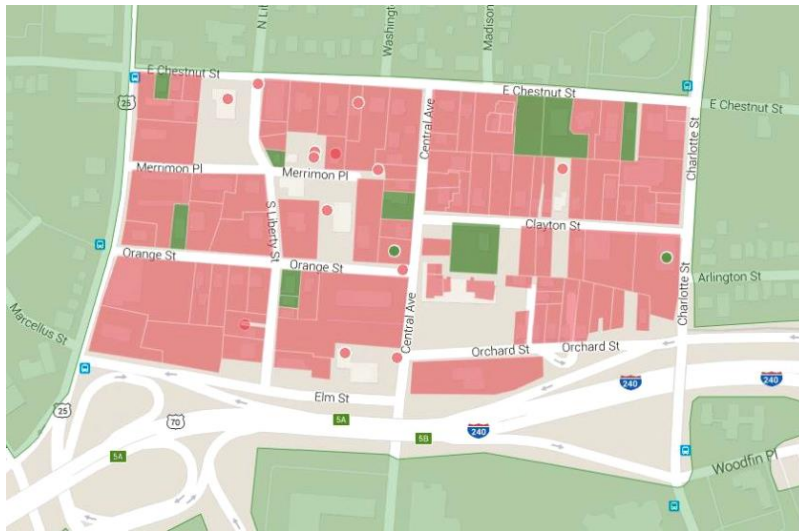


North Downtown

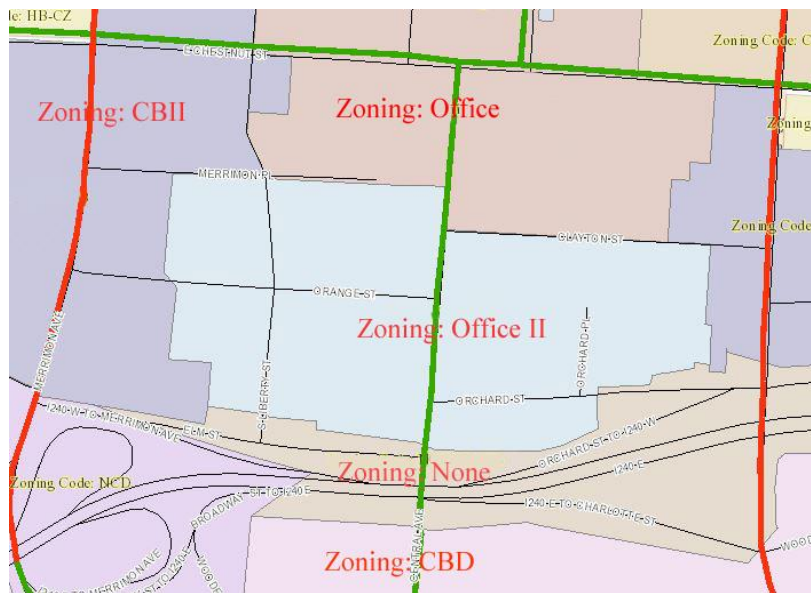
The business owners and residents of the North Downtown neighborhood, meeting together over a period of several months, are pleased to submit the following Plan on a Page.

1. Neighborhood Description - include items such as your neighborhood name, general character, relative location, and boundaries



The North Downtown Neighborhood is located north of I-240 and south of Chestnut Street, between Merrimon Avenue and Charlotte Street. This area is predominantly a business district with a focus on professional services including legal, counseling, health and dental practices. Several hospitality businesses are also present. The area also includes a residential population with both single-family homes and apartment buildings.

With the large volume of automotive traffic present on Merrimon Avenue and Charlotte Street, the North Downtown Neighborhood, via Central Avenue, is the main pedestrian access to downtown.

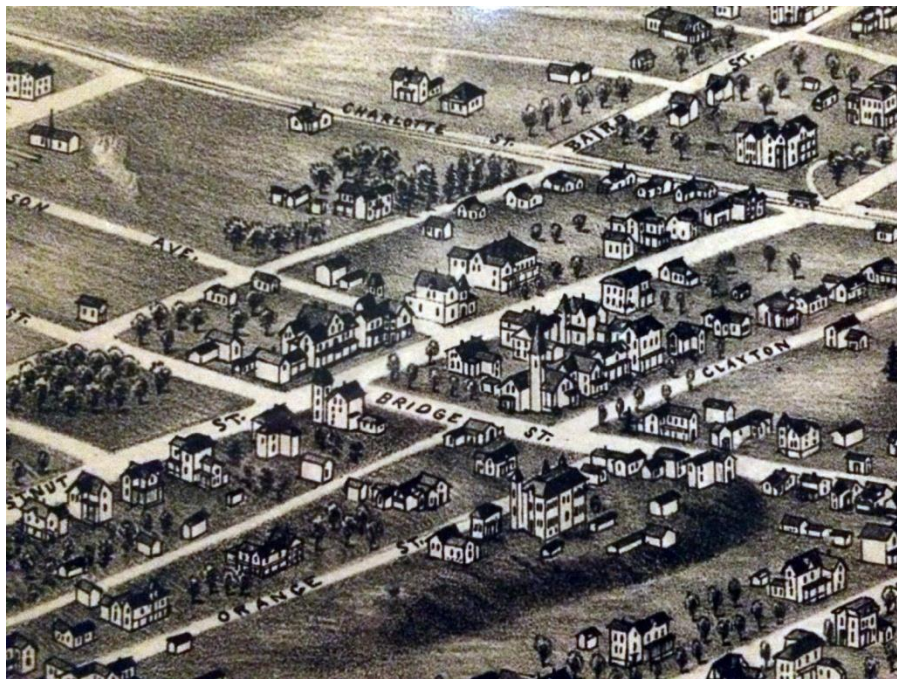


In contrast to traffic-heavy Merrimon Avenue and Charlotte Street, Central Avenue functions as a safe buffer zone for bicyclists, pedestrians and people with disabilities seeking access to downtown. With mature beautiful trees flanking Chestnut Street and residential neighborhoods to the north, our neighborhood is an important transition area between the Central Business District (CBD) and the residential neighborhoods that extend north of Chestnut Street.

The unified developmental ordinance designates this area as a combination of the following zoning districts: Community Business District II, Office, Office II, as well as an area adjacent to I-240 that is not zoned.

2. Neighborhood History - include a brief history, describing when and how your neighborhood was developed, including the factors that have shaped it over time

The North Downtown neighborhood was first a residential community and includes some of Asheville's oldest houses. Anna Woodfin lived at 26 Clayton Street in a home built in 1885. Her father, Nicholas Woodfin, occupies an important position in the history of Asheville. Anna organized a group of women volunteers that became known as the "Flower Mission" and was active in the community to bring flowers and other treats to the needy. She suffered a severe injury and was bedridden, but reportedly directed activities of the Flower Mission from her bedside. Mission Hospital maintains an "Anna Woodfin Award" to recognize individuals working in healthcare that display the "drive and tenacity" exemplified by Miss Anna Woodfin.



The main corridor that defines this neighborhood is Central Avenue, which in the past was called Bridge Street. Other notable historical figures include Ephraim Clayton, a famous builder for which Clayton Street is named. Albert Bunn, a brick maker from England, had a brick business on Charlotte Street and in 1905 built his home at 15 Clayton Street. Here he raised three children including one son named Robert D Bunn

who subsequently lived in the house for many years and had an antique store downtown. He grew up with Thomas Wolfe, who lived two blocks away. Robert's wife, Fannie Bunn, lived in the house until 2010. Recently the home has been renovated as the Bunn House, a small luxury hotel, richly appointed yet respectful of the past. In the 70s and 80s, this area was riddled with crime and drugs. Economic development and prosperity over the last 30 years has resulted in a complete turnaround. The neighboring Charlotte Street corridor has been identified as an Innovation District with an emphasis on pedestrian safety and walkability.

3. Neighborhood Vision - include the neighborhood's expectations and goals for what it will become over the next 10-20 years

As the adjacent business districts of downtown Asheville and Charlotte Street expand and grow, North Downtown will need to adapt to these changes. This area is a **critical pedestrian corridor for downtown access**, both for residents of the surrounding area as well as visitors to Asheville, many of which frequent dining establishments, shops and other attractions in this area and the expanding Charlotte Street district and need safe passage to and from the downtown area.

All cities endeavor to foster sustainable growth and regulate development in a way that maintains the quality of life and safety for residents and visitors alike. The city planners of Asheville, via zoning restrictions associated with Office and Office II areas (see image on page 1) have established North Downtown as a buffer zone that transitions larger high-rise buildings of the CBD to residential areas north of Chestnut Street. **Adherence to the city's vision and respect of the foresight inherent to this plan is important, thus a focus on Central Avenue as a critical component of the ability to realize a "walkable community" is key.**

To improve the pedestrian experience, we envision a Greenway on Central Avenue with amenities characteristic of a park, including trash and recycle containers, dog waste bags, water fountains, historical points of interest and novel ideas such as public sunscreen dispensers. Central Avenue is THE downtown approach for walkers and multimodal transportation and should welcome both its citizens and visitors with beautiful surroundings. Well-lit streets with security devices, including EMS activation buttons in the event of crime or medical emergencies, would be available, and points of interest guiding people to the pedestrian-friendly Charlotte Street corridor would be present. As vehicle traffic and congestion increases in the downtown area, we envision the development of an innovative public transportation program, such as a trolley system, that would start in the Charlotte Street area and connect to downtown via Central Avenue and continue to the River Arts district and West Asheville.

4. Neighborhood Strengths - identify up to three things that you like about your neighborhood, including things that are working now and that you would not want to change

The identifying feature and arguably the most valuable asset of our neighborhood is the peaceful atmosphere that exists, despite its close proximity to downtown and the heavy traffic corridors of Merrimon Avenue and Charlotte Street. Overall, the area is walkable and conducive to alternative methods of transportation such as bicycles. With the exception of Chestnut Street, the sidewalks are in good repair and the area feels very safe. A glaring exception to the feeling of safety is Central Avenue as it passes under 240 - this issue is discussed in a section below.

Our community of business owners and residents has a common stake and shared goal in the maintenance and improvement of this atmosphere, and we recently came together to address important issues regarding professional services and personal quality of life. The North Downtown Business Association represents businesses in this area, while community residents have come together via Nextdoor, an online community forum. Although the area is predominantly a business district, the

aspects of the neighborhood that make it attractive to small businesses are the same features that appeal to residential inhabitants, namely a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment. The cohesion among business owners in this area, many of whom are also property owners, is an asset. The owner pride in many of the businesses is evident in the appearance and upkeep of their buildings and surroundings.

5. Neighborhood Challenges - identify up to three issues or challenges facing your neighborhood that community members feel need further study or attention

Given the walkable nature of the North Downtown neighborhood, pedestrian safety is paramount.



Therefore, the first, most important issue to address is one that challenges the quality of life and safety of the residents, business owners, and clients, patients and patrons in our neighborhood: the 240 underpass at the southern end of Central Avenue. Approximately 100 feet from this area, a murder was committed on February 12, 2016 and the body was thrown into a nearby dumpster at 56 Central Avenue. Since then, we have frequently seen flowers, wreaths and various tributes to the murdered individual.

The lack of lighting, the presence of homeless camps, and abundant trash frequently present on the sidewalks of Central Avenue as it passes under 240 create a dark, intimidating, and frightening environment that is conducive to crime and drug use. This represents the most important pedestrian corridor for walking to downtown. Our neighborhood community has initiated lines of communication with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and various members of the city with the initial goal of having the area cleaned up and lights installed. We are also interested in having a mural painted on the concrete posts, which are a prominent feature of the underpass. It has become clear that this area is an "in between" space where important



issues fall through the cracks, possibly due to lack of clarity as to city vs. state jurisdiction and, therefore, responsibility. While the North Downtown neighborhood is not part of the CBD, it should be included in this district considering the need for regular cleanup, monitoring and maintenance to keep up with the use and needs of the space. Several members of our business community volunteer their time to clean up trash and other refuse, but this is not a long-term solution.

As noted above, the homeless frequently occupy the space under 240 and are at least partly responsible for the bottles, cans and accumulation of garbage in this area. There is a large space at the top of the underpass that has been cluttered with mattresses, clothing and other articles for quite some time. Alcohol consumption and use of drugs appears to be commonplace in this specific area; this "safe haven" for nefarious activity should be removed. Our goal is to work with the NCDOT to block access to the space, thereby making it a less desirable location for activities that harm the community.



Another issue is the large hotel planned on Elm Street adjacent to Merrimon Avenue. This project and the associated routing of traffic through our neighborhood is a cause for concern. Because the property cannot be accessed in its entirety directly from the Merrimon Avenue exit, it is our understanding that cars will be routed on Orange Street and Liberty Street in order to arrive at their final destination. Our group has significant concerns about the existing density of traffic at the intersection of Merrimon and Orange Street. We feel any project that adds to the existing density of car traffic in this area is not a realistic solution.

Other issues that significantly impact our neighborhood include problems with parking on Chestnut Street. Given the traffic between Merrimon Avenue and Charlotte Street, an alternative arrangement must be found in order to accommodate future growth of these areas while maintaining pedestrian safety and the attractive aspects of this tree-lined street. Finally, there are a handful of dilapidated properties; however, these are the exception to the overall high level of owner pride and improvement that our neighborhood has enjoyed over the last 10 years. Both business owners and residents of our neighborhood need to come together to compel these property owners to improve their structures, or the community as a whole will suffer.

6. Neighborhood Responsibility - based on your answer to item #5 above, identify the items for which the neighborhood is responsible or has influence over and can take care of itself, vs. items for which the City is responsible

Regarding the Central Avenue 240 underpass, first and foremost is something the neighborhood cannot possibly do for itself; assuming responsibility for essential street maintenance. Because the Central Avenue 240 underpass is in a transition zone from the CBD to a mixed residential and business district north of downtown, and because it includes an interstate highway bridge as well as a surface street and

sidewalk, essential street maintenance appears to have been neglected and fallen between the jurisdictional cracks of City of Asheville and NCDOT. Instead, the City and the NCDOT must each be proactive, take the initiative and cooperate with the other to promptly address essential street maintenance issues such as lighting, elimination of the access to homeless camps, engineering to allow for effective drainage and prevent erosion following storms, and clearing the structure, sidewalks and street of mud and trash which now accumulates and obstructs pedestrian and vehicle traffic in the area of the underpass, as well as placement and servicing of recycling and refuse containers. The project for a mural, desirable but not an essential street maintenance function, should be driven and paid for by NCDOT beautification project funding and adjacent businesses and residents via fundraisers, donations, and grants as available.

The city needs to recognize that the North Downtown neighborhood represents an important and essential corridor for pedestrian traffic into downtown Asheville. Given projected growth and the lack of parking in the downtown area, projects to promote walking are important. To the extent that the city establishes and maintains a city park for the enjoyment, recreation and health of its citizens, the city should recognize that this area is deserving of a "Central Avenue Pedestrian Park" with all of the appropriate elements of a safe outdoor space, including trash and recycle containers, animal waste bags, EMS stations, informational plaques with points of interest, as well as the attendant cleanup and maintenance roles. A city as great and unique as Asheville is deserving of a grand entrance that can be appreciated on foot – the ideal place for such a park is Central Avenue.

7. Alignment with Council Goals - describe how the issues facing the neighborhood align with the goals identified in the City Council's Strategic Operating Plan

<http://www.ashevillenc.gov/Departments/CommunityRelations/StrategicOperatingPlan.aspx>

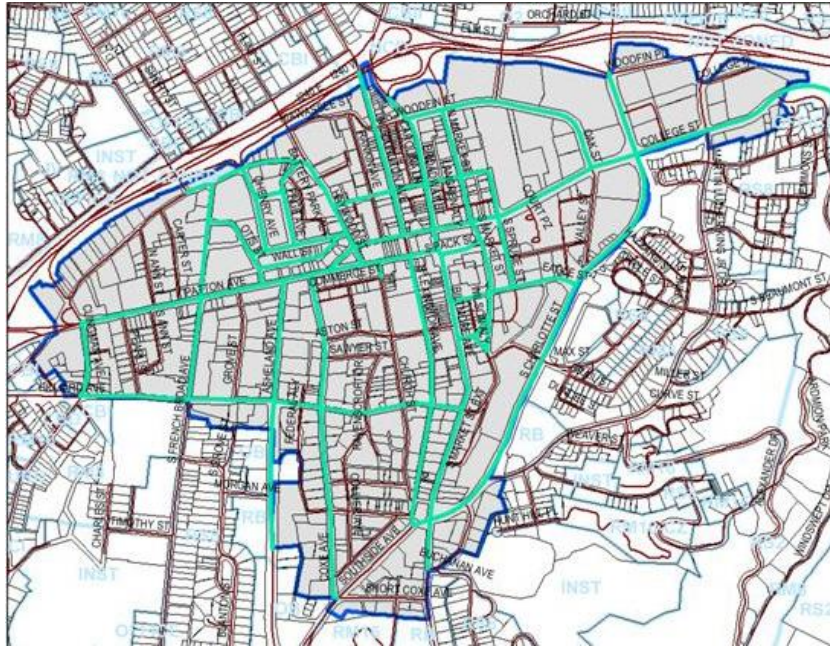
Pedestrian-oriented development is a key component of the strategic operating plan outlined by the Asheville City Council. Our vision for Central Avenue as the main pedestrian corridor for walking access to downtown aligns well with the City Council's vision for a well-planned and livable community. Specifically, abundant opportunities exist in our area for creating a welcoming and walkable entrance to downtown Asheville that would also represent a symbol of a commitment to non-automotive transportation. Promotion of a clean and healthy environment with less reliance on fossil fuels and cars synergizes with the development of a healthy community that favors walking as a healthy alternative to driving. Placing an emphasis on Central Avenue as a "pedestrian park" provides us all with an amazing opportunity to create a community resource that can be used by our diverse community without exclusion. The citizens of Asheville need a safe pedestrian thoroughfare and Asheville needs a public space emblematic of its mission.

8. Alignment with Asheville City Development Plan 2025 Goals (current comprehensive plan) - describe how the Plan on a Page corresponds to the major themes(such as affordable housing, land

use, transportation, air and water quality and economic development) of the Asheville City Development Plan 2025 Comprehensive Plan. Refer to the Plan Management and implementation Matrix #1 of the 2025 Plan for more information

As Asheville continues to grow, one of the main challenges will be to find ways to maintain the character and integrity that has made Asheville such a popular destination for tourism and for establishing a home.

In July 2014, the City of Asheville Planning and Urban Design Department updated “Key Pedestrian Streets” in the downtown area, shown in green in the image below. Although this document focused on



the downtown area, we feel that critical to any discussion of pedestrian-friendly streets is an emphasis on arrival into the city itself from surrounding residential and business districts. Walkable access to the downtown area via Montford Avenue and Central Avenue has not received enough attention.

The “Six Principles of Sustainability” as defined by the Comprehensive Plan include multimodal transportation

planning, defined as planning that considers various modes (walking, bicycling, automobile, buses, trolleys etc.) and various connections among these modes. Another Principle defined by the Comprehensive Plan is mitigating aspects of climate change. These principles are interdependent and build upon one another. Designating Central Avenue as a “Pedestrian Park” that fosters multimodal transportation would have an immediate impact and would be an easily recognizable achievement towards meeting these goals.

This project will also fulfill another one of the “Six Principles of Sustainability” – to “Encourage healthy communities.” By creating a pedestrian-friendly area that is safe throughout various times of day, we can improve the health of our community in keeping with the Comprehensive Plan. Furthermore, using existing sidewalks and right of ways keeps costs low. Given that Central Avenue is a logical pedestrian corridor to downtown from the North Downtown and Charlotte Street neighborhoods, it is critical that the city heed public demand for greater safety on Central Avenue at the I-240 underpass.